

# Law change helps elderly who lose jobs

**Q: [On the new state law on unemployment benefits], I was just wondering what age that would begin .... Is it only for those age 50 and older? ...**

— S.E., Scituate

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**A:** Under legislation that was approved by the General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Carcieri on June 22, the state can't count your Social Security benefits against you when calculating how much in unemployment compensation you should receive.

As a result, should you lose your job, you'll receive the full amount of unemployment benefits for which you're eligible; there'll be no reduction based on how much in Social Security you're collecting.

The law will especially help retirees who are drawing Social Security benefits, work to help make ends meet, then lose their jobs.

But they're not the only ones who'll benefit, said Kathleen S. Connell, Rhode Island state director of the AARP, a membership organization for people 50 and older.

The new law will also profit younger people who are collecting Social Security and lose their jobs, she said.

(Remember that Social Security isn't just about retirement benefits; the program also provides survivor and disability benefits.)

**Q: I was laid off on Jan 5, 2005, but that was 2005. What I want to know is, is that news for the working seniors ... retroactive? ...**

— R.K., Warwick

**A:** The provisions of the new law are not retroactive, said state Rep. Thomas C. Slater, D-Providence, the chief sponsor of the House bill.

The General Assembly cannot make retroactive changes to such laws, he said.

So the new law doesn't change the rules for

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A 1

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## MoneyLine

*Continued from Page A8*

people who lost their jobs in the past; it's only for those who lose their jobs in the future (and who are also collecting Social Security benefits), Slater said in an interview at the State House.

Thus, if you lost your job in 2005, the state won't pay you to make up for any money you lost back then because of the Social Security offset provision.

But if you lose your job in the future, you'll get the full amount to which you're entitled, without any reduction based on your Social Security benefits.

**TODAY'S TIP:** For more information about unemployment insurance in Rhode Island, or to file a claim, call (401) 243-9100, or use this Web site:

[www.dlt.ri.gov/ui](http://www.dlt.ri.gov/ui)

Keep in mind that you may file a claim for benefits by phone or online.

Remember, too, that the state Department of Labor and Training earlier this year launched a program to allow beneficiaries to receive benefits electronically, instead of by paper check. (You may have your benefits deposited directly into your bank account, or access your benefits through an electronic payment card.)

Last year, nearly 50,000 people collected about \$195 million in unemployment benefits, the agency said.

The maximum weekly benefit on new claims for unemployment insurance is \$513, up about 4.3 percent from the old rate of \$492. (Unemployment insurance is paid for by employers, through a tax on their payrolls.)

By the way: The maximum weekly benefit on new claims for Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) is \$652, up from the old rate of \$625. (TDI is paid for by employees, through a tax on their wages.)

Neil Downing is a Journal staff writer and author of *The New IRAs and How to Make Them Work for You*. Questions about your money matters? Call us at 1-401-277-7484 and leave a message, or e-mail:

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Sorry, no personal replies; as many questions and issues as possible will appear here.